

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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R 280541Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9710

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, EGEN, KU

SUBJECT: KUWAIT CITIZENSHIP QUESTION

REF: KUWAIT A-28, APRIL 17, 1974

SUMMARY: RECOMMENDATIONS BEING FRAMED BY KUWAIT PLANNING BOARD WHICH WOULD CREATE CATEGORY OF "PERMANENT RESIDENTS". THIS SYSTEM, IT IS HOPED, WOULD ALLOW COUNTRY TO RETAIN VALUED EXPATRIATE WORKERS WITHOUT DILUTING DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION OF COUNTRY'S CITIZENS OR FURTHER TAXING AN ALREADY OVERBURDENED GOVERNMENT WELFARE SYSTEM OF QUALITY EDUCATION, HOUSING, ETC. TO ITS CITIZENS. UNDER THIS SYSTEM, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IF ADOPTED, "PERMANENT RESIDENTS" WOULD CHIEFLY ENJOY INCREASED

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES (E.G. OWN REAL ESTATE) AND SECURITY FROM ARBITRARY DEPORTATION WITHOUT NECESSARILY BEING GRANTED GREATER POLITICAL RIGHTS OR WELFARE BENEFITS. IT ALSO LIKELY GOK WILL BE URGED TO MORE CLOSELY COORDINATE ITS MANPOWER POLICIES WITH OTHER ARAB GULF STATES IN ORDER TO AVOID FURTHER UNRESTRICTED COMPETITION FOR SKILLED PROFESSIONALS AND WORKERS. END SUMMARY.

1. IN VISIT WITH KEY KUWAIT PLANNING BOARD STAFF MEMBER FOR MANPOWER QUESTIONS, EMBOFF WAS GIVEN SOME INSIGHTS INTO BOARD'S LIKELY RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOK RE LIBERALIZING RIGHTS AND BENEFITS FOR LARGE EXPATRIATE COMMUNITY RESIDING IN KUWAIT.

2. STAFF MEMBER, WHO ONE OF PRINCIPALS ON COMMITTEE CHARGED WITH STUDYING ENTIRE QUESTION FOR GOK, TOLD EMBOFF THAT IN 1973 MORE PEOPLE LEFT KUWAIT THAN ENTERED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MANY YEARS. THIS COUPLED WITH INCREASING BOOM IN THE ENTIRE AREA AND A CONCOMITANT QUICKENING OF COMPETITION FOR SKILLED WORKERS AND PROFESSIONALS HAS FORCED GOK TO RE-EXAMINE ITS CITIZENSHIP POLICIES AND TO CONSIDER TAKING STRONGER MEASURES TO KEEP AND ATTRACT SUCH INDIVIDUALS (FOR THOROUGH DISCUSSION OF QUESTION SEE REFAIR). SOLUTIONS PREVIOUSLY FLOATED TO SOLVE PROBLEM HAVE INCLUDED A RADICAL LIBERALIZATION IN THE GRANTING OF CITIZENSHIP AND CREATION OF A CATEGORY OF "PERMANENT RESIDENTS" TO AVOID VIOLATION OF ARAB LEAGUE STRICTURES AGAINST LIQUIDATING PALESTINIAN QUESTION.

3. WHILE FINAL PLANNING BOARD POSITION HAS NOT BEEN FORMULATED, IT NOW APPEARS THINKING HOW TO DEAL WITH PROBLEM HAS BEGUN TO CRYSTALLIZE. THE PLANNING BOARD STAFF WILL LIKELY RECOMMEND AGAINST ANY RADICAL LIBERALIZATION IN GRANTING KUWAITI CITIZENSHIP. THIS COMES NOT ONLY BECAUSE SUCH A MOVE WOULD RADICALLY ALTER THE DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL CHARACTER OF THE STATE BUT ALSO BECAUSE AT PRESENT KUWAITI CITIZENSHIP CONFERS UPON ITS RECIPIENTS A HOST OF PRIVILEGES WITHOUT REQUIRING MANY RECIPROCAL OBLIGATIONS. THUS, KUWAITIS ARE ENTITLED TO HOUSING, HEALTH CARE, EDUCATION, JOB SECURITY, ETC., BUT DO NOT PAY TAXES AND ARE NOT SUBJECT TO CONSCRIPTION. WHILE STAFF MEMBER AVOIDED SAYING SO DIRECTLY, THIS HAS CREATED A SITUATION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WHERE INDIVIDUAL INCENTIVES HAVE LARGELY BEEN KILLED, FORCING KUWAIT TO RELY HEAVILY UPON ITS EXPATRIATE POPULATION TO MAKE THE WHOLE SYSTEM WORK. MOREOVER, THE GOK IS PRESENTLY HARD-PRESSED TO KEEP ITS PROMISES TO ITS CITIZENS IN SUCH AREAS AS HOUSING, HEALTH CARE, AND EDUCATION DESPITE ITS EMBARRASSING RICHES. THE IMPLICATION OF THIS IS CLEAR. IF KUWAIT GRANTS MANY ADDITIONAL PEOPLE CITIZENSHIP, IT WILL OVERLOAD THE DEMANDS UPON THE SYSTEM WHILE FURTHER INJURING THE ABILITY

OF THE GOVERNMENT APPARATUS TO MEET THOSE DEMANDS.

4. FOR THESE REASONS IT APPEARS THE PLANNING BOARDS'S RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE FAR FROM SWEEPING AND, IF ADOPTED, WILL LIKELY DISAPPOINT MANY EXPATRIATES. THESE PROPOSALS WILL LIKELY CALL FOR A NEW CATEGORY OF EXPATRIATES HOLDING "PERMANENT RESIDENCE CARDS". THIS STATUS WOULD BE GRANTED ONLY TO THOSE (NOT JUST PALESTINIANS) WHO HAVE PROVEN THEIR WORTH TO THE STATE AND WHOSE SERVICES ARE LIKELY TO BE REQUIRED IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER ALL EXPATRIATE NATIONALITIES WILL BE ELIGIBLE OR ONLY ARABS. WHILE THE STAFF MEMBER DID NOT MAKE IT CLEAR WHAT BENEFITS WOULD GO WITH SUCH A STATUS, HE IMPLIED THAT IT WOULD BE NE MEANS GUARANTEE IDENTICAL RIGHTS NOW CONFERRED UPON KUWAITIS. MOST LIKELY SUCH STATUS COULD MEAN EQUALIZATION OF PAY FOR EQUAL WORK, THE RIGHT TO OWN REAL ESTATE AND DIRECTLY CONTROL A BUSINESS, AND OTHER MEASURES, WHEREBY SELECTED EXPATRIATES COULD IMPROVE THEIR LIVING STANDARDS HERE WITHOUT SUCCUMBING TO THE SAME SORTS OF SOCIAL ILLS WHICH HAVE OVERTAKEN MANY OF KUWAIT'S CITIZENS (E.G. SLOTH).

5. THE QUESTION IS STILL FAR FROM RESOLVED. OBVIOUSLY THE FINAL VERDICT WILL REST WITH THE CROWN PRINCE/PRIME MINISTER AND THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL. IT NOW APPEARS LIKELY THAT THE PLANNING BOARD, WHICH IS CLOSEST THING KUWAIT HAS TO "THINK-TANK" WILL RECOMMEND AGAINST ANY WHOLESALE CHANGE OF KUWAIT'S PRESENT POLICY AND WILL COUNSEL GOK TO TRY MORE CLOSELY COORDINATE WITH OTHER ARAB GULF LITTORAL STATES TO AVOID RUINOUS SITUATION, WHEREBY EACH GOVERNMENT TRIES TO OUTDO THE OTHERS WITH POLICIES TO ATTRACT AND KEEP VALUABLE PERSONNEL. WHETHER THIS PROGRAM, IF RECOMMENDED AND ADOPTED, WOULD BE ENOUGH TO CONTAIN THE SITUATION IS PROBLEMATIC, IT WOULD SEEM LIKELY THAT SUCH MEASURES WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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